

# The Beginning

They are professionals.

They have learned their lines.

They are waiting to make their entrance.

They are ready to begin.

This feels like a new beginning.

Like we are retaking our vows. I have been given a reprieve. I have been forgiven for leaving you. And what we do now is a new dawn, a new era. A new relationship where anything is possible. You have been good to me. You have looked after me. And now I know how important that is to me. At the moment, we have two coats and a coat. But the boots are pointing in different directions and the coat doesn't fit. There are two microphones to talk into but nothing to say. Silence. The Fire Exit sign hangs over Ollie's head like a premonition or a prophecy. Ever since I started performing I was told to look at the Fire Exit signs. So now, when I'm in a theatre, I don't know where else to look. You have given me new eyes. A new pair of spectacles. To see the things I want to see when they are not there. Maybe that is what you do best. That's as far as I got.

The Beginning is the second in a trilogy of works taking Shakespearean texts as starting points for performance. I will work as an artistic director and 'outside eye' with Ollie Smith and Nicky Hobbs as performers and devisers. Julian Harp and Kate Rowles will document the process with photography and video. Kate Upton will design the costume e.g. *donkey's* head. James Harrison will design the lights and technical aesthetic. Claire Summerfield will act as a producer and mentor.

Inspired by the prologue by the mechanicals in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, The Beginning explores theatrical entrances and the notion of a play within a play. The performance deconstructs the rehearsal process. It is a story that jumps around between where we are now and where we were when we first performed. A story that remembers how we felt, waiting in the wings, before we went onstage for the first time. We will interview each other about our memories of our first performances and how it felt to perform for the first time in front of an audience.

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<b>Performers</b> Nicki Hobday Michael Pinchbeck Ollie Smith
<b>Producer</b> Claire Summerfield
<b>Lighting Designer</b> James Harrison
<b>Costume Designer</b> Kate Unwin
<b>Photography</b> Julian Hughes
<b>Video</b> Kate Rowles
<b>Design</b> Cubic

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LOTTERY FUNDED



LAKE  
SIDE





‘Pinchbeck is such an interesting theatre maker’  
The Guardian

‘Subtly performed and cleverly created theatre in absentia’  
Total Theatre

## Biographies



Nicki Hobday

Nicki Hobday is a Manchester-based performer and deviser. She is a founding member of Trace Theatre and has worked with various theatre companies and artists including Michael Pinchbeck, Proto-type Theater, Drunken Chorus and Until Thursday. Her first solo show, Nicki Hobday Conquers Space, has toured extensively and was presented at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and The Lowry, Manchester. She has performed nationally and internationally since graduating in 2007 with a degree in Contemporary Theatre and Performance from Manchester Metropolitan University.

[www.tracetheatre.co.uk](http://www.tracetheatre.co.uk)



Michael Pinchbeck

Michael Pinchbeck is a writer, live artist and performance maker based in Nottingham. Michael was commissioned by Nottingham Playhouse to write The White Album (2006) and The Ashes (2011). He is currently working on a new play, Bolero, supported by Theatre Writing Partnership. In 2008, Michael was selected by Arts Council England to represent the UK at the Biennale for Young Artists. In 2009 and 2011, his work was selected for the British Council’s Edinburgh Showcase. He has a Masters in Performance and Live Art from Nottingham Trent University and is pursuing a PhD at Loughborough University exploring the role of dramaturgs in contemporary performance.

[www.michaelpinchbeck.co.uk](http://www.michaelpinchbeck.co.uk)

## On Beginning

Thank you very much for coming to the show. It’s lovely to have you all with us. I wanted to explain very briefly what we’ll be doing here tonight if that’s OK. This is the beginning so we don’t have a programme yet, but if we did this is what it would say. We’ve spent a few weeks playing with these different ideas, these different strands, that felt in some way connected to love. We’ve practised the guitar, we’ve danced like The Shirelles and we’ve kissed a lot.

I made a piece called The End, which was a resignation letter to theatre, and I wanted this piece, The Beginning, to be a love letter to theatre. To explore how you get into theatre because you love it. So for me, for example, amateur dramatics was a way into theatre. Amateur coming from the Latin ‘to love’. In the beginning, we performed because we love it and then somehow it became a job. In the beginning, we were looking at A Midsummer Night’s Dream as a story where people fall in love. The Mechanicals are amateur dramatists because they all have other jobs. Bottom is a weaver.

In the beginning, we were listening to Histoire de Melody Nelson, a concept album by Serge Gainsbourg that tells the story of his love affair with Jane Birkin, an English actress who was originally from Nottingham, where I live. Jane Birkin plays Melody Nelson on the album and, in the beginning, Melody Nelson was going to come from Nottingham but it wasn’t sexy enough. So Serge Gainsbourg changed it to Sunderland, because in French ‘Sonderlond’ sounds very sexy. So later on in the show we might talk about how wherever we are performing tonight is not sexy enough, so we always have to change it to Sunderland, which might be a problem, if we ever get a gig in Sunderland.

So I suppose what I’m suggesting at the moment is that it’s a very tentative weave of threads about love and we’re just trying to make sense of it all. In a way, the question we ask in the show ‘So, what do we now?’ has become a motif. Now I have entered the space, we don’t really know what to do with me. I am in the show but I am not in the show. I shouldn’t be here but I am. I am still trying to honour my promise never to perform again.

So that’s it really, at this stage, I don’t know if that feels appropriate as a starting point? Sorry, this is Nicki and Ollie and we’ve never worked together before so this is the beginning of our relationship. Are you ready? Let’s begin.

Michael Pinchbeck  
[www.makingthebeginning.tumblr.com](http://www.makingthebeginning.tumblr.com)



Ollie Smith

Ollie Smith is a live artist, performance maker and writer based in Nottingham. He has been performing in The End with Michael Pinchbeck since 2010. Ollie collaborates with a variety of artists on performances in theatres and site-specific locations. He has been commissioned by greenroom (Manchester), Hatch (Nottingham) and circuit (Leicester) and has toured work across the UK. In 2010 he presented a site-specific piece at Theatre Writing Partnership’s Momentum festival at Curve (Leicester). Since 2011, he has been mentored by New Perspectives (Nottingham). He is currently working on a solo show 27, which speculates on his own rock ‘n’ roll death. Ollie trained in acting at Bretton Hall and graduated in 2007.

[www.ollie-smith.com](http://www.ollie-smith.com)

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Profile

